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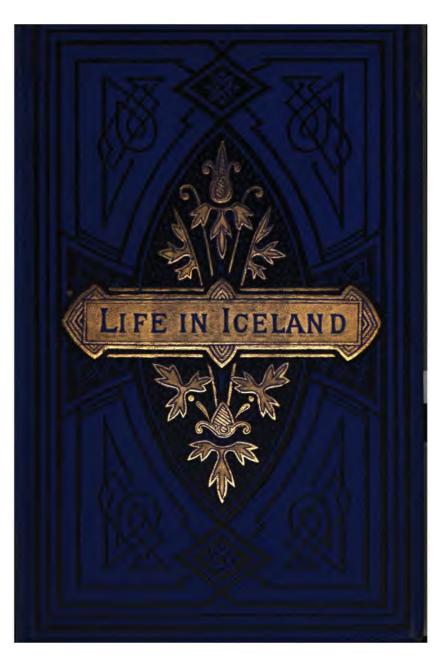
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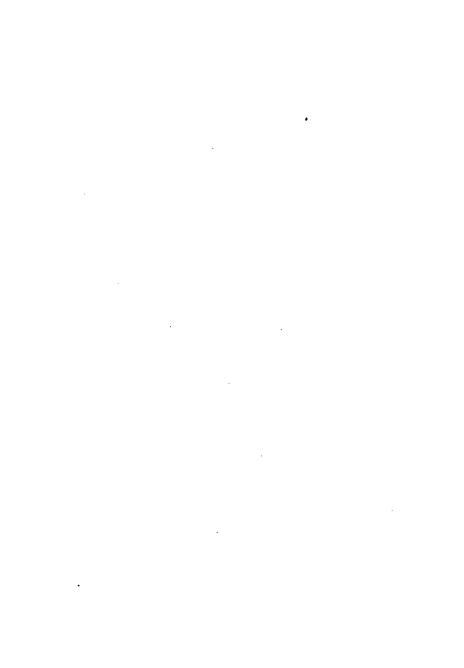
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## THREE SKETCHES

OF

## LIFE IN ICELAND.

By CARL ANDERSEN.

Translated by

MYFANWY FENTON.

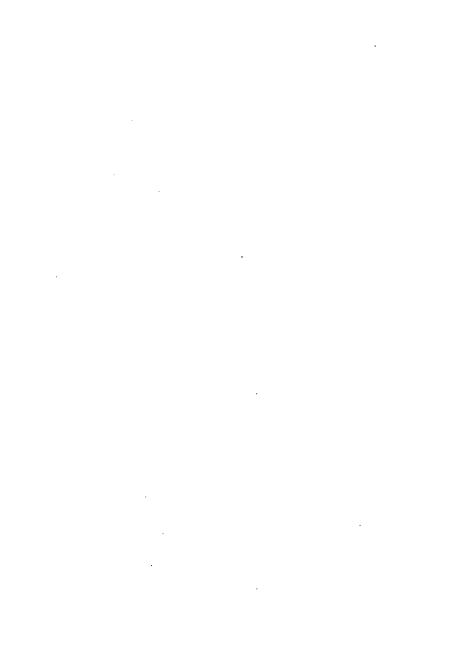


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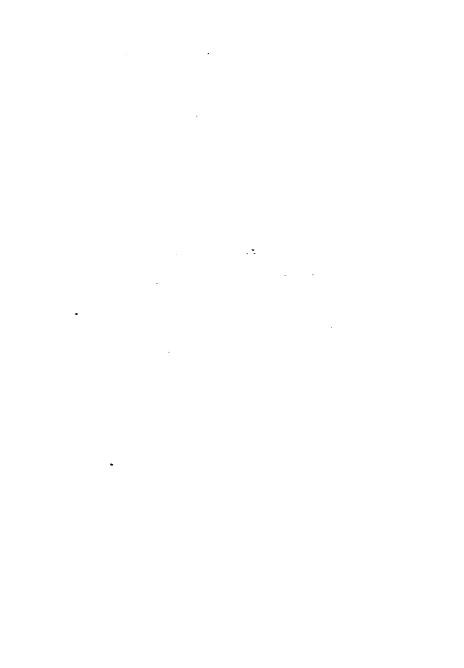
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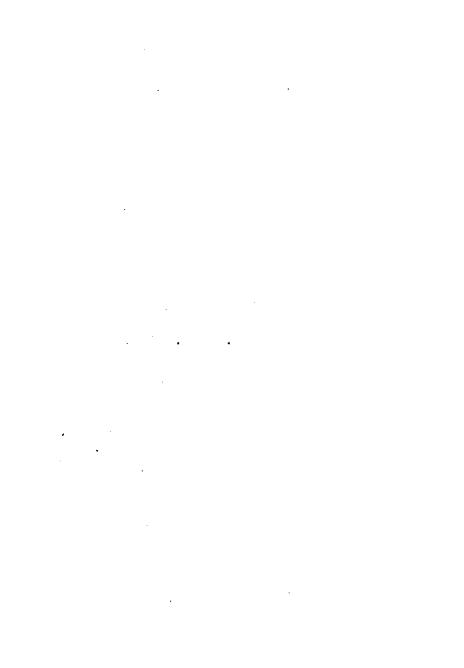
PRINCESS OF WALES.

Copenhagen.



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## THREE SKETCHES

OF

## LIFE IN ICELAND.

#### THE CAIRN OF GRIM'S HEIGHT.

I.

ON a small strip of rocky land between mountain and frith, somewhere in Iceland, there lay a cottage farm. It looked a lovely gem in the sunshine with its little green plot of grass down the mountain slope, the growth of which was due to the father of the present farmer, who had been the first to clear the earth in this place.

The father had been called Grim, and the son was called Grim; and so it was self-evident that the farm should receive the name of "Grim's Height." It lay retired

far from any other farm, but for all that it was neither lonely nor silent, winter or summer; for beneath it the sea foamed and fretted, and on the slope above, upon a beetling rock that jutted over a deep chasm, the ravens had fixed their resort. And if it were lonely in the winter it was lively enough in the summer, when the country people from the more distant districts drove to the markettown in the fair-time. Yes; every one must then pass along the way that ran down by the Frith, for this was the only road fit to travel on in that part of the country.

The countryman, Grim, had an only child: a pretty little bright-eyed girl, who might be about eight years old. Her birth had cost her mother's life, and therefore she was the one to whom his soul clung nearest in the world. He called her "The Sunbeam of Grim's Height," when he kissed her morning and evening; so she was called by every one else, for her joyous laughter brought gladness to them all. At the sound of that sweet voice, the old grandmother felt young again, and when she held the little Helga by the hand the grass appeared a sheen of light

beneath her feet. But then dear grandmother had also joy to give back in return: what tales and legends she could tell of fairies, elves, and ghosts! Her store of such lore was endless.

Helga's merriest time was in the summer, when the people in travelling-dress were obliged to pass there; to look at them crowd after crowd, so many in succession, so many in a row from all the numerous farms on the other side of the mountain. She had found out how many belonged to each farm; she knew who the woman was with her son and daughter, who rode before her on the bright high-pacing horses. Then came the farm man who drove all the pack-horses, bound together one after the other, head to tail; and at last came the master himself, who brought up the rear, so that he could overlook all and see that it was as it should be, and that nothing was in disorder. Yes, she knew very well all about it, and yet it never stopped, but passed along; there was no resting place here: the grass-land was too poor for that, and the sand-fields too stony.

She had eyes, had little Helga, and it was

far from any other farm, but for all that it was neither lonely nor silent, winter or summer; for beneath it the sea foamed and fretted, and on the slope above, upon a beetling rock that jutted over a deep chasm, the ravens had fixed their resort. And if it were lonely in the winter it was lively enough in the summer, when the country people from the more distant districts drove to the markettown in the fair-time. Yes; every one must then pass along the way that ran down by the Frith, for this was the only road fit to travel on in that part of the country.

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Somestrange memories must have awakened in the old woman by the sight of it, for she shuddered violently, and would immediately have turned back; but just at that moment Helga perceived down upon the shallows a long line of horsemen, who were going to the fair—six and twenty horsemen. She had already counted them; and was not that worth looking at?

"It is the rich Magnus from Fagredal that rides past," said her grandmother; she knew it by his voice, which she heard as he called out to some one before him.

A boy on a milk-white horse rode the first one of the train. Helga had never seen so beautiful a horse before. And the beautiful boy! with his fair curly hair, rosy cheeks, and bright intelligent eyes; and then his dress, a black felt hat on his head, and he rode in overalls with bright buttons and green stripes down the side! Just like that the king's sons must have looked in those old times of which her father had read to them last winter. She hung her head on one side from pure bashfulness. It was he to whom Magnus had called.

not king before she got something to ponder over. Why was it that now one, and now another, sprang off their horses, and cast the three stones upon the cairn down there in the way?

II.

IT was one evening, about the season of lamb weaning. Helga had been with her old grandmother down to the fold to choose a lamb out of the flock for her own property. The poor old woman, who had bad eyes, and must therefore wear a deep shade before them, found much difficulty in keeping up with Helga, who, full of joy at her new possession, sprang leaping and spinning before her, unmindful of the nearth need over which the other could but slowly proceed, and particularly so, as the knitting should be attended to at the same time. The weather was beautiful: the Frith gleamed beneath the glowing sun; the thrush trilled clearly; and the child sang in unison; and before the old woman knew it she was farther from home than she had been years-so far that she herself with her sight could see the cain lay far down upon

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"See, there we have the Cairn of Grim's Height. Hoah! jump off, little Thorvald, and throw the three stones upon the cursed Cairn."

The boy sprang down, picked up three stones from the way, cast them upon the Cairn, and whiff! like an arrow he was on his horse again, then he cried: "Here I ride, farewell, little girl!" and away he flew. Soon both he and the last horse in the train had vanished in the west, where the mountains seemed to close the way. How dazzlingly bright it all looked, he and the whole troop, as it glided away from Helga's eyes!

"Now let us go home, little Helga," said her grandmother; "the day is far spent, it is supper and bed-time for you and me, child."

"Why did he throw the stones upon the Cairn, grandmother?" asked the child. "Why did little Thorvald throw the three stones upon the Cairn?"—Yes! she knew the name of the pretty boy, and would not easily forget it again.

"Well, that story is not for little girls," answered the old woman. "Far better it is to listen how beautiful the wagtail is singing yonder behind the stones! Gently, thou art

too hasty, child! Thou wilt frighten it! There now! look, it has flown away. Thou art much too eager, little friend, softly, softly!"

With an eager insistancy very unusual with her, the child had seized the arm of the old woman, and would not be repulsed; and her grandmother, perceiving at last that she would have no peace until she had satisfied the curiosity of the child, said, while putting back the tassel of her coif, that in her eagerness had fallen over Helga's face:

"Very well, Helga, if you will walk quietly like a good little girl, so that we get home quickly and well, you shall hear the history." And thus she told:

"A young woman, not far from here, lived once as a servant; no bride in all her silver ornaments could look more beautiful than she did, and she was so innocent and joyous, she was for ever with a laugh and a song upon her lips, so that everybody thought good of her; the day must be bright, people said, whenever she appeared. But thus it happened one autumn, when she returned from the summer pasturage amongst the mountains that at once she grew silent, forgot to sing,

sought lonely ways, and often wept in secret. This change excited remarks and much bye-talk amongst the people, and so the winter passed. But when the snow melted in the spring-time, she seemed to be easier in her mind—but her merriment had not the ring of nature in it, and one day it was noised abroad that she had thrown herself into the cleft under the Raven's Rock down there and perished in a miserable manner; and so they buried her there by the roadside, where you now see the Cairn."

"Why did they not take her to the churchyard and lay her in the earth where my mother lies?" asked the child. She spoke in a hushed voice, and anguish stood painted on her little countenance.

"She had murdered her own child," said the old woman; "therefore she could not come into consecrated ground; and that every one may know where the worthless creature lies, that Cairn has arisen from the stones they cast over her. Every one who knows her sin, casts three stones: the first because she made God the Father so severe in justice towards her; the other two for God the Son's, and God the Holy Spirit's sake. It is for terror and warning against sin!" said the old woman, in a voice that sounded as strange to the child's ear, so sharp and piercing was it now. "But what are you going to do? Helga! Helga!"

The child had slipped her hand free, and as if driven by a secret power she could not withstand, she ran with all her might back to the Cairn. Just as she had seen Thorvald do, she did, she raised three stones from the road, and, with as deep a gravity and earnestness as if she sat upon the judgment seat, threw them upon the Cairn; yes, there they were, the first for God the Father, the second for God the Son, the third for God the Holy Ghost—was it then strange that she was solemn, the little accomplisher of chastisement? But what now? was it only the stone last thrown, that rattled down from the Cairn, or was it a snipe that screamed, or did the shriek come from beneath, from the bowels of the earth itself? Oh! it was dreadfully uncomfortable all around! In a moment Helga lost all her dignity of condemnation, and was in full speed to reach her grandmother; she did not feel

really safe before she was in the home-croft, and had the stone-fence behind her, and her father before her. He stood outside the yard with outspread arms to catch his little "Sunbeam," yet even then she could not help believing she still heard the stone rattle.

### III.

THAT night she had a dream. She dreamed that it was in the twilight, and she stood alone by the Cairn of Grim's Height, with a stone in her hand. "Throw the stone," cried some one, and the voice was Thorvald's; nevertheless he was not there, for she could see no one. She cast the stone upon the heap. "Another!" cried the voice, "and yet another!"-and the third stone left her hand; it rattled, it moaned, it wailed, and lo! Helga would have run away, but, as she thought in her dream, she could not move her foot from the place; the mound separated, and a young woman with flowing and dishevelled hair, pale cheeks and hands folded and tightly pressed upon her breast, rose from the earth, and fastened upon Helga a look of such sorrowful entreaty, that the heart of the child, tender as wax, melted

at the sight, and she burst into a fit of sobs and tears. Then the woman said: "Thanks, child, for these tears; they are the first that have been wept over me for many a year! I see in them that you will never again cast a stone upon me, and through your instrumentality others will also cease to do so; for, child, you must know, that every stone cast pitilessly on my Cairn strikes me in the heart, so that I must shriek from agony and torture. My tears and my repentance have won my pardon from a merciful God; hard cruel men alone still hate me, they set me up a mark for shame and reproach for all time, and stigmatize to all my unconsecrated earth. be milder, child! Shine in peace upon my spot of earth, sweet Sunbeam! hide me from the evil eyes of men!"

The woman vanished;—but Helga was awakened by her grandmother, who had been roused by the child's sobbing in her sleep.

"Hast thou had a bad dream, child?" she asked. "Well, well, go to sleep again, my treasure! it is no matter if it is so, for nasty dreams mean just the contrary, thou knowest very well!"

But grandmother was very much mistaken, it was no ugly dream; for in the heart of little Helga the seed was planted, in this dream, from which should spring the loveliest blossom of her life, and it sprung to life and budded forth unconsciously to herself. But she never could forget the pale woman's prayer, "Hide me from the evil eyes of men!" How was it possible for this to be done? Yes, it was in a new dream that the salve was laid upon Helga's eyes that should open them to the light. And thus it frequently happens that an innocent child dreams which is the right way.

Again she dreamed; it was a beautiful spring morning, and her father had gone to look after the men who were busy levelling and clearing the grass fields. Every year a waste piece was thus cleared, the stones taken away, the holes filled up with earth, and greensward laid over the places, and the following year soft grass and golden flowers waved and blossomed where the stones had been.

"Will you go with me, my treasure?" said Grim. "Come with me, Sunbeam, and call the flowers forth!" And Helga went with him, and watched them as they worked. At that moment they were busy with a nasty piece of work, a great flat stone that defied all their efforts to remove it; it was too strong for them.

"Well, well, then we will let it rest where it is, friends," said Farmer Grim; "but for all that it shall be made profitable; with plenty of good mould and sods over all, little Helga's lamb can no doubt find fodder there."

And at these words the child's eyes were opened; it was thus the Cairn should be covered up and hidden from the eyes of men!

No bee is so indefatigable in the prosecution of its object, as the innocent heart of a child to pave a way for sun and light. How diligently Helga worked to bring the sun to this place! How many, many times did she not fill her pinafore with mould, and yet how long it seemed to vanish into the greedy chasms between the stones and leave no trace behind! How many days, months, yes, years, should run before the Cairn became a green hill! The little girl of eight years old had sprung up into the blooming maiden before the lamb grazed on its top! The

winters followed summers, and each one bore its beautiful mark of her work, the loveliest amusement of her childhood; each year saw her work of love nearer its end, until at last there came a summer when the hill stood perfect in its lovely dress of green.

Everybody wondered at what she was doing; but soon this work of hers began to give an unconscious tendency to the minds of the farm people; little by little, the curse that rested on the spot vanished before their eyes; the tender action of the child's heart had caused peace to shine on it for them.

It was the turn of the passengers from other parishes next to wonder at it. Their astonishment was deep. What had become of the Cairn? Surely they must have passed it. Why formerly one could scarcely see a blade of grass, and now it is just as green as any resting-place in the valley.

But it was not enough that the Cairn should change into a soft green hill during these years; the soul of the child unfolded itself in the loveliest manner. Nature, that by her assistance had put forth all her rich powers of beauty, was not ungrateful; it was as if every flower that sprung from the earth under her hands found its answering blossom in her breast. But for all that she did not live in a beautiful, soft, unconscious dream-life, for the claims of actual life never called upon her in vain; scarcely had she passed the age of childhood before she was a full and perfect woman, house-mother for the people of the farm after the death of her old grandmother, and a support for her father, on whom he could depend in weal and woe.

Summer followed summer, the people drove past as usual on the way to the market town, but no one leaped from his horse for the three stones. The Cairn had vanished under the soft carpet which from the height spread itself round on all sides, and it seemed to them in the intervals between each visit the soft green circle expanded—it would soon become an entire meadow!

#### IV.

THUS it happened once in the month of May: the first Danish ship of the season had cast anchor by the trading place, and the latest news was eagerly canvassed all round. Amongst other items was this, that Thorvald of Fagredal had returned from Copenhagen in this ship, after having, with great honour, passed his examination at the university in that city.

"He will one day be a great man, that you will see!" said his fond mother, when they received the message of the ship's arrival.

"Ah! but where will you find a wife for him?" asked the wife of a neighbour who happened to be making a little visit to her when the news came.

"It must be the Amtmanden's daughter, Elin; for I do not suppose he can marry a woman of less rank."

"Well, he must see after that himself, but the very best of them is not good enough for my boy," answered his mother, with a tear in her voice.

His father said nothing, but he thought just as much of his son, and so he set off to the market town to fetch him home. On this occasion he took his best horses with him: nothing could be too good for his son, so everything was dazzlingly bright and proper. Magnus was a man of a quiet and sedate

character, not easily moved by anything out of his equilibrium; nevertheless, this could not hinder the glad beatings of his heart, as he thought of the joy and pride he had always had in his only child. But when he saw his son again, tall and upright in bearing like a learned man in his black frockcoat and dazzling white linen, but with the same light curly hair, and the old sweet music in his voice, it was almost too much for the old man.

"God be praised that I see you just as you were when I left home!" said his son; "and thanks for all your goodness to me until now"

"No thanks," said Magnus, folding his great noble-looking boy in his embrace.

Not another word could he utter; but the tears that rolled down his cheeks just then, said more to the heart of the son than many words.

Upon a spirited milk-white horse—the old man had not forgotten the kind of ridinghorse his son delighted in—Thorvald rode home by his father's side. The way was long, but what of that? They did not remark it; they had enough to speak of, and there was plenty to look at. He had been away so long: first as private pupil with the Dean; then at the grammar school in Bessestad; and finally many years abroad. Much during this time had therefore changed as far as people were concerned; but nature had remained unchanged. The glorious mountains stood as he had seen them in his childhood; the frith was still the same; the eiderfowl had not changed its resting-place down by the strand. All was as ever—but no! what is this?

"Where are we now, father?" asked Thorvald.

"By Grim's Height," answered Magnus.
"Up yonder thou hast the farm; farther on the 'Raven's Cliff,' and here by the road-side—Well, now, canst thou remember it, my son?"

Thorvald did not require this reminder; just then he remembered a bright summer evening, when he had leaped off his horse, and cast three stones upon the Cairn, as he was told to do. In bright life-like colours the whole of this picture of his childhood stood before his eyes, and again he could distinctly

see in memory's eye a lovely little girl, and an old woman with a shade before her eyes. But what is this? The whole has vanished, and the barren field changed into a smiling meadow.

"Ay, well may you be astonished, my son, at that which 'The Sunbeam of Grim's Height' has effected during your absence," said Magnus. And he then related to his son all that which he and others knew of this matter.

As his father continued to speak, Thorvald grew more and more thoughtful. Before his soul, the little girl grew in the splendour of her glorious transfiguration, until she stood before him as a lovely woman. And it was she who had once stood there with her little head hanging bashfully on one side. Never before had he heard of a charity so strong to work as this. In silence, with no thought of praise—whilst he was tossing about the world, and fancying that he was nearing fame—she had accomplished that which Heaven itself must stoop to view with joy. She had shed peace upon the resting-place of that sinful woman, silencing the voice of the ac-

cuser, chasing from thence all unholiness or sin, and from the waste and sterile desert calling glad blessing forth.

"How warm it is to-day, father," he said; "let us rest a little in this place."

They dismounted; and, the horses not making the slightest opposition to a rest, the two sat down on the grass under Helga's hill.

"Now I do believe that people begin to rest by Grim's Height," said old Farmer Grim, smiling on his daughter, as he saw the horses grazing down by the road.

Helga shaded her eyes with her hand. Yes, really, she could see a white horse, and there was a dark brown one, with light mane and white fetlocks.

"So it is Magnus of Fagredal; at all events, that riding-horse with the white fetlocks is his," said Grim. "Well, I suppose he has been in town to meet his son; Thorvald must now have finished with his studies."

What joy! It had come then at last that people sat down for rest and shelter under the hill, and he was the first stranger that had done this. The curse was broken. Helga

felt that the reproach had passed from the spot.

She remained standing in the croft until she saw them on horseback again ride away. As they did so the rider on the white horse turned, looked back on the hill, and from that straight up to the farm. He checked his horse, and for a few minutes remained sitting motionless in his saddle. Helga's heart beat strongly, yet she knew that so far away he could scarcely distinguish the outline of her figure; and yet the blood streamed into her cheeks as if he could see straight down into her soul. See how closely he was resting there, and had been ever since the first meeting on that bright summer evening.

## V.

IT seemed as if the spot had only failed its consecration, for, since the first travellers, the master of Fagredal and his son, had let their horses graze there, it frequently happened that other wayfaring men stopped by the hill to bait. This was a great joy for Grim: he would exclaim:

"Twice this week have people rested there,

I do declare!—in this week three times—in this every day! Well, now we can no longer count them. Soon they will rest many times in the day. Yes, now it is really splendid upon Grim's Height, my Sunbeam!"

And he rubbed his hands together, in his glad happiness.

But it was seldom now that Helga came there herself. There was so much to busy her upon the farm, that it was with difficulty she could slip from home, and, besides, she would much rather keep away when the roads were so full of people; solitude was dearer far to her in those days.

However, thus it happened once, when the throng of passengers had somewhat ceased, for everybody was busy with the hay harvest, that one Sunday afternoon Helga sat with her knitting in her hand down by the hill. She knitted as diligently as if this occupation was her sole business and care on earth, but yet her thoughts were visibly far from the work that grew beneath her fingers. The deep, calm peace of the Sabbath day reigned around her; the waves broke against the rocky strand with a musically subdued

monotonous murmur. Now and then she heard the cry of a sea-gull, or a snuffling sound from Balder, the old sheep-dog, who was enjoying the Sabbath rest in the grass at the young girl's feet; but these disturbances only served to make the sweet silence of nature more observable. Suddenly the dog pricked up his ears, raised his head, and gave a little bark, and in the same moment the tramp of a horse was heard far away on the road. The young girl awoke from her reverie, and turned her head at the sound. There was the white horse, just as at that very moment it had been present in her thoughts. It came nearer—it would doubtless go past but what could she do? It was necessary to hold Balder fast; he would always run so in the way.

"Are you not ashamed of yourself, Balder?" she said chidingly to the dog. "Is that your behaviour? Does that man look like a—a—"

The sentence was never finished; for her blushing looks falling upon the handsome young man on the white horse that had halted just before her, the comparison she had in her mind changed. He of whom in secret she had dreamed, as the one surpassing all, stood before her in the full radiance of reality.

# VI.

But later on this lovely summer evening, a bird sang on the summit of that little hill, and in his song he told of honour and of happy love to come; and the predictions of the little songster were all true; and long, long years after this, when Helga, a fair old woman, whose ripply hair had turned to silvery silk, was living in the Court House far away, the loved and honoured wife of her dear Amtmand,\* she would think with joy upon what that little bird sang for him and her, that summer evening, upon the Cairn of Grim's Height.

<sup>\*</sup> An Amtmand is a superior revenue officer, having jurisdiction over a large division of the country which is called an *Amt*. The office is almost equivalent to that of a governor. Iceland is divided into three Amts, which are each under the jurisdiction of its respective Amtmand.

# THE RAVEN.

I.

THE long Icelandic winter approached with giant strides. The October winds drove the banks of cloud, heavy with rain, closer together, and pressed them down far over the lofty summits of the mountains. The waters of the frith grew darker, the migratory birds had all passed away, but the Ravens yet "held a parliament," as it is called, when they cover the mountain-plain in a flock farther than the eye can reach, screaming and cawing, asking each other what description of winter it would be, and deliberating as to which farm each should take-singly, or two or three together-so as to procure food for the winter from the hand of man, when Nature began again the display of her old parsimoniousness.

It was dark, the mantle of night had fallen upon the noisy cawing forms, and it was not long before a perfect silence reigned over all the plain, for everything, except the wind, was weary, and had sought repose. But scarcely had the next cold morning touched the horizon with its first grey tints, before all the Ravens had finished their sleep, and everything was ready for their projected journeys.

Some flew south and others north. One of them took up his quarters down by the frith there where Farmer Torbjörn lived, under a high mountain, the sides of which hung straight over the house. Torbjörn's son, Kjartan, was the first to bid the black winter guest "Welcome."

It was perfectly natural that the boy should be the first to set eyes on the Raven, for he was the universal friend of the birds, and they were his best playfellows. He knew their notes, so that he could mimic with his voice the different tones of each, however various they might be; he knew where to find their nests, both high upon the sides of the mountain, or deep down amongst the hillocks, and whether with or against their will they must come when he needed them, and assist in and share his games and pranks; for he understood how to tame and train those birds, who had sufficient comprehension to learn. And now the wisest and most teachable of all birds had come-and he had seen it first! it should be his Raven, that it should! Therefore it was, that every morning as soon as he slipped out of the feathers, his first act was to seek out the Raven, his second to throw it a morsel of food; now such care for its welfare must unavoidably lead to great things. The Raven would soon come to know him, and they would become great friends. No sooner did it see him come out of the door before it hopped towards him, every day nearer and nearer, until at last it would eat out of his hand; but it should do something for its food.

"Can you hop high, my Raven?" asked Kjartan, and the Raven must spring into the air after its bit.

"Now can you sit upon my shoulder, my Raven?" he said; and the bird lighted on it.

"Can you take this morsel from my head,

my Raven?" and the Raven plucked the bread out of his hair.

This last achievement afforded the greatest amusement to both of them; but what would spring from this? Time should prove.

#### II.

DURING the course of the past year, an old pauper woman, called Groa, who for the last twenty years had been passed from farm to farm, had been settled with Torbjörn. She was but little welcome, for she had a sharp tongue and a vixenish temper, and was as ugly as an old witch could possibly be, as she went hobbling along with her stick, and muttering something between her teeth; but the glances she cast upon you from her red and inflamed eyes were the most horrible; it was seldom that she looked any one in the face, except she was angry with them in a more than common degree, and then her glance was as if she would burn them to ashes on the spot. There needs no words to make it understood that Groa and Kjartan were sworn foes from the moment they met. Her whole appearance and her peculiarities of manner gave

him too many good opportunities for practical joking for him to resist, because of her hard words, and, besides, the laughter was always on his side, as none of the farm people could bear Groa, and therefore he could not see the slightest reason why he should sit as still as a mouse, only because she sat near him. Even Torbjörn himself could not help laughing sometimes, although he was a grave man, and he would say: "There, there, little Kjartan, leave the dirty old wretch in peace."

If things were bad between them before, it was however ten times worse after the Raven came to the place and had learned his master trick.

"The cursed thief!" screamed Groa every time she caught sight of the Raven, and she hastily collected all her different things together, so as to secure them from it; her knitting, her brass-rimmed spectacles, or the most precious of all, her horn snuff-box. She knew very well that if it only saw her shadow it snapped at her; nay, so bold and wicked was it, that it would take the very spectacles from her nose! This Raven was by nature the most cunning thief she had

ever met with, and it was as if it took a particular pleasure in making her the object of all its most malicious tricks.

One morning she stood leaning her head on the corner of the keeping-room wall, blinking at the sun—pop! came the Raven pounce from above, and stole from her hand the dry fish she had just beaten tender for her breakfast. Out came the stick! but where was the Raven? Yonder, on the mountain steeps where it used to hide all its stolen goods, on spots which none could reach, save those who, like it, were provided with wings.

"May the deuce take the cursed thief," screamed the old woman after it; "and thee with it!" she added, as her eye fell upon Kjartan, who stood there and laughed with all his might.

# . III.

THE winter was a severe one. The storm howled, and the snow drifted, and at last it was so bad that for days no human being could go out of doors; for this reason the people on Torbjörn's farm often assembled

for many hours at a time in the keeping-room, and shortened the time by reading or telling stories of the events and transactions of ancient and modern days.

The keeping-room was an upper room, and ran the whole length of the largest of the farm buildings under the roof; it was reached by a ladder from the long dark passage that led out to the croft, and was lighted by two small windows set in each gable. A row of beds, with counterpanes of parti-coloured wool, ran down each side of the room under the sloping roof, and on these the farm people sat, the men and women each busy with their work, one with her spinning, another carding wool, a third busy carving wood, or such like. It was a little world to itself, which in such times must be all in itself, but that spite of its solitude was most certainly as full of all the emotions and interests of life as the people in the large thickly-populated towns, where the one can scarcely find a place without pushing his neighbour out of the way.

One day the conversation fell upon supernatural things, Witches, Ghosts, and Spectres, and, as might be expected, opinions were divided; but at last said old Jon, the herdsman, to whose judgment in such doubtful matters most of them from their very childhood had been accustomed to submit:

"You can now believe what you will, good folks, but for all that the thing is not improbable, for I know what once happened northward there in Skage Frith."

And then he related as follows:

"Skegge Björnssön, the man was called, who lived in a place there in the dale under one of the mountains, and people called him the Rich Skegge, for nobody knew the number. of his sheep, and no other farm could compare with his in the excellence of its land. You shall only know that the salmon were so plentiful in the stream that flowed through his meadows that his people scarcely cared to eat more of them after Jon's Mass \* was past. But Skegge was a hard man; he certainly took good care of himself and those who belonged to him, and he thought that others should do the same, and it was no rare thing for one and another to go away from his door with empty hands and dry throats,

<sup>\*</sup> The Feast of St. John Baptist.

whose mouths he would have done much better to have stopped in time, the truth of which word that which now comes will convince ye.

"It happened one day about the end of the aftercrop there came to Skegge's farm a drunken vagabondish wretch. He looked no beauty, that I can tell ye, poor wretch, for he had broken his nose in some drunken bout, and on the same occasion his upper lip had been cleft, so that it never grew together again. Now, added to this, he had a hoarse thick voice, and staggered in his gait as he approached the stackyard where Skegge stood gloating over his many haystacks. It had been a good grass year this summer.

"'Yes, you have plenty both for you and me, I see,' said the man. 'I believe I will stay here for the present.'

"'However I think that you will take your stumps from my fields, and that in a jiffy, before Spot there takes you in tow,' answered Skegge, pointing to an old white sheep dog with a black star in the middle of its forehead, that always struck me in a most disagreeable manner, as making its eye still more ferociously black, and a dark stump of a tail. It was accustomed to show its teeth at poor people, and this time as usual it stretched out its forelegs, and with stooping head wrinkled up its jaws with a snarl, as was its manner, and the stranger was not long in starting, as you may think. He reeled away as fast as he could, but more than one heard his threatening words as he hastened along.

"'It can possibly be, Farmer Skegge, that you and yours will not get rid of me so very long; but will come to give shelter to poor me, when you least expect it.'

"On that very evening the winter set in quite suddenly, and all night, with the whole of the following day, it snowed and froze with a strong wind, so that you could not see for a hand's breadth before you. Many a time on that day did the master look out of the door. If he hoped the man whom he had driven out into the storm would come back is more than I can say, but certain it is that something there was that weighed heavy on his mind. At last, when it cleared up so that we were able to go out and see after the outdoor beasts, we found a human being outside the

hedge of the home field frozen to death. It was the strange man that had fallen dead; the cold itself had taken a disgust to him! Now when Skegge saw the slit in his upper lip he was strangely moved; that was plainly to be seen, for he shifted colour at the sight, and neither that day nor the next did he speak many words, although he was not usually a man to betray what he felt.

"Skegge paid for the funeral of the poor frozen man, who was buried in a decent comfortable manner; and there were those who believed he did this from remorse, because his hardness may be said to have caused the man to die a violent death.

"I remained over eight years in Skegge's service after this event; and it was clear to me, as well as to others, that he changed in that time a deal more than could be put down to the account of age. A dark cloud had come over him; and we remarked that when he walked alone he would look from side to side, or turn round quickly to look behind, as if he sought some one who continually followed him. Yes, at last it was so patent that every child knew what he looked

for; it was naturally no other than the guest who, when he had been driven away by Skegge, had promised to come again when he was least expected, and who now fulfilled his promise. He followed Skegge as a ghost!

"Eh! ye may look with open eyes, good folks, but there can be no doubt of the matter, by what took place, already more than once, in the time that I was on the farm. One morning, at daybreak, we found the best cow slaughtered and flayed outside the cow-stable door, the flesh cut in lumps was stacked up in heaps like turf, and the skin drawn out as smooth as a duck's egg; and another morning we found half the hay-stacks swept out of the stack-yard into the middle of the home field. There was plenty of occupation that in his perplexity and desire for peace Skegge ordered the ghost to execute, but he did it all; for I should tell you that such like goblins always ask the man they follow what he wishes to be done, and so it is best for himself to find the piece of work that can take the longest to do."

"Well, then, I would have set him on a piece of work he should not have been quit of

in a hurry," said Kjartan, who had listened to Jon the herdsman so far in a state of the highest excitement.

"Yes, I can believe you, little Kjartan!" said Groa. A mocking smile was on her lips, and an angry fire burned in her eye, as she looked on him. "Well, what should it be, now?"

"Thou shouldest rock the 'Horn' from the crest of the mountain yonder on the other side of the frith, and I think then I should have permission to live in peace from thee, old witch!" answered the boy.

Groa's eyes literally blazed with fire at this new scoff, and her vexation was not lessened when she heard the laughter of the others at the task that Kjartan had laid out for her. It was no child's task either; for the Horn was a monstrous stone that had taken its name from its shape, and hung over the frith from the summit of the mountain; just where the steep path that led to the nearest town ran, it hung like a threatening sword over the heads of the passengers, yet appeared so firmly grown to the mighty crag that the mountain itself must rock from its foundations before

the Horn could be moved from its position.

### IV.

THE footsteps of Spring were again visible: the first flower sprang to light to welcome her; the sun put forth his power and melted the snow on the mountains, to form with it a thousand little laughing, glittering brooks; the birds returned from their southern journey; the swans collected and sang in the early hours of the morning, before they flew to their homes in the lakes of the valleys; and the ravens flocked together to fly in company up to the plains on mountain-tops. Kjartan's Raven must follow the rest; but the last evening before its flight it found an opportunity of executing its rarest feat. It sat on the keeping-room roof, where it could look down on its master, who stood in the home field, a couple of yards from the house, with a large slice of bread in his hand. Not far from Kjartan sat Groa, drawn together in a heap, and groaning as if she had just returned from one of her wanderings and had exhausted her last strength. She sat basking in the last sunbeam, and thought of nothing, least of all upon her two enemies who were so close behind her. The boy could no longer restrain himself, it was too glorious an opportunity for a hoax to be missed; he stole softly behind the old woman, broke off a morsel of bread, laid it hastily upon her head, crying in his mischievous wildness:

"Canst thou fetch that, my Raven?"

In, an instant the Raven was down on the old creature, and snapped, not only the bread, but the cap with it, leaving her bare headed, so that her thin grey hair fluttered about in the evening breeze. With a swift strong flight it flew aloft with its booty, the tassel of the cap hung down from its beak, as if it beckoned to her, saying: "Take me from him, old woman!"

At first she remained benumbed and speechless with anger, but no sooner did she hear the laughter of the boy behind her than she rose in an instant, and, spite of her weakness, as if filled by a preternatural strength, she turned and struck at him with her stick. She did not however reach him, for he had seen her intention, and, springing aside, had run farther afield; but as if she knew no longer the weakness and infirmity of old age, she was after him, until in a moment her strength failed her, and she stood suddenly still with uplifted stick and lips apart, on which the white foam hung. That fearful picture clung to him; he never lost it to his dying hour.

"No matter, I shall follow thee to the end of thy days!" she shrieked. "Run if you will; I shall reach thee, however, at last!"

"But first thou must take the Horn from the mountain!" cried Kjartan.

"Yes, now I go to do it, only wait a bit!" she said in whistling tones, and fell head downwards upon the earth. She remained where she fell, motionless, and when they drew nearer to bring her help, Groa was dead.

"That was a coarse trick you played the old woman," said Torbjörn, "and I think now you are old enough to occupy yourself with something more useful than teaching ravens more thievish tricks than they know already."

"He should remember the fate of Skegge Björnssön," thought Jon the herdsman, but he kept his thoughts to himself.

All that Kjartan himself thought was: "To

blazes with the old witch!" and next winter, when his Raven sought shelter on the farm, he amused himself with as much daring conceit with it as if old Groa had never crossed the path of either of them.

# V.

THUS passed the years, and in their course Kjartan developed into a fine young fellow, with fresh brown cheeks beaming with health, and a pair of strong arms that made him any man's equal when he got a scythe in his hand, or at any other job of work whatever. But he had a consciousness of his own strength that often verged upon presumption, and if he once got a thing into his head it was no easy matter to get it out again, and it ended most frequently in the rest yielding to his will. The wild daring in his character which showed itself at such times, and would seem for a time to choke his natural, innate good disposition, awoke many sorrowful fears in Torbiörn's quiet mind, which he now and then expressed to himself in this thought: "If only it does not happen to him as the proverb has it: that a haughty spirit goeth before a fall!"

It was evident to the father that this spirit of defiance had in a particular manner sprung to light after that spring evening on which Groa met her death, and this gave him matter for much deep thought.

But he was not the only one who remarked this circumstance; it was clear to all, that from that time a change had come over Kjartan, and it was very few he could now brook beside him.

Did he remark anything of this himself? In some way he surely did, for a conviction had gradually grown upon him, that there was in his life a threatening, uncomfortable something which it was impossible for him to get rid of in any other manner than showing himself a strong and powerful man, not to be daunted, but able to stand and meet it, whatever it might be. But he was never alone, which frequently happened, without his thoughts flying back to the history of Skegge Björnssön, that Jon the herdsman had told them, and this so clouded his life that it was only now and then by some particular exertion of power that he could shake himself free from the mists that enveloped him.

But at once the sun arose for him in all its glory. One evening down the dale he saw a young girl; she stood in the croft outside her father's yard, and he addressed her; they spoke together on indifferent things, but the soft light in their eyes shot like an electric spark from heart to heart, yet no word was spoken then that could point to the secret thought each had in their soul. They parted, but he did not return home lonely, for her image, stamped into his soul, went with him, and in his thought she stood continually before him, in all her loveliness as she appeared the first time he saw her in the soft summer evening standing before her father's gate. And this image remained there as the days rolled on, and cast on his way a rainbow of glory, before which the dark forebodings passed away. The people around him could not fail to remark the greater gentleness and guietude that had come over him since this beautiful dream had sunk into his heart. The menace that for ever oppressed him fled afar, and hope, like a soft and tender dove, flew with his thoughts over mountain and frith to that beaming figure of peace and joy that

gazed after him from the green grass-plot—towards Astrid! the end and aim of all his secret longings.

Day after day this attraction grew stronger, until at length it was as if he had no longer space in his breast for the feelings that it contained. One thing only stood in his way; it but remained for her to speak the happy word; her confession should meet his in the spring which now approached them.

### VI.

BUT this year the winter had been more than usually severe; the rivers and lakes had kept the ice so long it was as if they would never melt, whilst huge masses of snow rested far down over the sides and summits of the mountains. When at length the spring sunbeams melted these immense masses of snow, all the rivers overflowed their banks, and the thawing snow ran in a broad stream down the mountain sides, loosening the earth, and carrying gravel and stones along with it, which, rolling down the slope, made the greater part of the roads dangerous, and many of them perfectly impassable.

Such was the state of affairs out of doors when Kjartan was seized with his longing to start to Astrid, and Torbjörn therefore advised him to wait a bit, and see what time would bring; it would be the act of a madman, he said, to ride under the mountain to the other side of the frith now, when every moment a snow-slip might be expected, which would imperil the life of both man and animal. For a time Kjartan yielded to the sensible arguments of his father, the more so as deep in his own mind he felt himself as a bound man, who had no right to risk his life, now that the hopes of another life were knitted into his.

But at last there came a soft, warm spring day. The waters of the frith lay still and clear as a mirror, the mountains loomed forth in the loveliest colours, with white shining peaks, whilst the sides varied between green and blue; where the sun's rays played upon it, green, but where the clouds shot over and pressed down into its recesses it showed as blue. Kjartan stood in the home-field and gazed in admiration over the beautiful scene that spread itself around him so smiling and

fair, and it seemed to him that never before had the home of his childhood enfolded itself so tenderly around his heart. Ah! if she were only here to share with him this wealth of joy! And then a voice within his soul exclaimed: "Away! away! I fetch my bride to-day!"

He ordered out his horse and saddled it himself. His father begged him to remain at home and wait a couple of days still.

"The clouds in the south prophesy a storm, it may perhaps fall on us before thou hast crossed the frith at ebb-tide," he said; "and there is certainly no such great hurry with that journey over the mountain but that thou canst wait until the way offers more security for the horse's feet." But, unhappily, the concluding words awoke in a moment in Kjartan's breast the old spirit of defiance.

"I will go," he said, "if the clouds yonder prophesied storm ten times over; I am man enough to make the horse under me go forward, and why should there be danger or difficulty, except for bold men to overcome and get the better of? Good-bye—to my return!"

He swung himself into the saddle. what was the matter with "Brownie"? Never before had she shown so much unwillingness to leave the yard, he was obliged to make use of the whip before she would start. stopped the horse by the hedge of the homefield, and, as if impelled by a superior unseen power, he turned his head once more towards home. The afternoon sunshine played on the panes of the keeping-room windows, and just at that moment Torbjörn stooped to enter its door; the back of his head shone like silver in the gleaming sun, and a full conception of the value of that seriousness which had always rested upon his father's conduct broke upon the son; a strange tenderness glided into his soul, but it was not long that he lost himself in this unwonted mood, for, turning his head to again ride forward, his attention was called to his Raven, who this spring had prolonged its stay upon the farm far beyond the usual time. It was hopping from hillock to hillock around the horse, as if it would enclose its master and friend in a circle, at the same time raising its voice as though to call to him.

"Out of the way, my Raven! or the horse will tread thee under foot, old bird!" said Kjartan. But the Raven continued to hop round the horse, and he must scare it away by smacking his whip, lest the "Brownie" had trodden it under her hoofs. Then the horse started off at a brisk trot; but long, long he could hear the Raven screaming after him.

#### VII.

An hour's ride brought him to the spot, where at low water the frith could be crossed on horseback; by so doing a long and difficult way, passing all round the great bay, was By this transit many hours were spared. gained, and in the black sandy bottom you had into the bargain a road so smooth and firm, that it was a real pleasure to see a spirited horse toss round and fly over it. After the tide there were always many waterpits, larger or smaller, but which at the lowest water-point seldom reached above the horse's fetlock, but yet there was always enough to scatter water-drops over man and horse when they crossed in a brisk trot or gallop. This ride had always been one of Kjartan's greatest pleasures, and the "Brownie" knew the way well, for she had faithfully served her master from the day when, as a tiny foal, she became the boy's possession. But the passage across the frith was not as usual to-day, there was something in it that would not go, the horse went only step by step; both horse and rider took their time. Kjartan sat lost in his own thoughts, and took no heed of the "Brownie," that often shook her head, then stopped, so that it required a jerk of the reins to set her off again. The pointed-winged sand-marten piped over Kjartan's head across the water from the strand, the plover sent him its own peculiarly melancholy flute-like tone, the sun drew back behind the clouds, and little by little the whole scene, both land and sea, took a sober grey tone, which in that time and place could not fail to impart a strong feeling of melancholy to the mind of every one, unless, like Kjartan, their thoughts had drifted far away into the golden dreamland of love.

The opposite side of the frith was reached, and the path which he now followed had the

precipitous mountain on the left with the frith on the right. Lost in deep thought and sweet dreams to come, he rode forward until he was awakened by a rustling sound caused by the falling of gravel and stones from the mountain that elevated itself in the path a short distance before him. The "Brownie" became skittish, and would not go farther; but Kiartan was again his old self. "If you will not go on by fair means you shall with foul," he thought, and gave the horse a couple of strokes with his whip, and forward she must go in spite of herself. Kjartan found the way worse than he had thought: it needed both eye and finger to be on the alert, and mark every motion. Now he woke to the consciousness that the fine weather was past; the thick clouds had collected on the top of the mountains, and the storm burst upon him from the frith. His most prudent course would have been to turn back here, since farther on the way was still more difficult to travel upon; under the Horn, the road to begin with was so stony and steep, that even in good weather none but an Icelandic horse would have been capable of keeping its footing on it. When they had reached this spot, in a moment the "Brownie" reared on her hindlegs; Kjartan set his heels in her sides and used the whip, but the old horse would not move from the spot.

Just then Kjartan looked up into the weather, the mist divided above the lofty mountain, and the Horn projected forth; it struck him that it moved, it was as if it said mockingly, "Come, if you dare!" And he beheld in a bank of fog a preternatural figure, that with one hand seemed to rock the stone, whilst with the other it struck after something in the air that resembled a gigantic Raven with outspread wings, and something fluttering in its beak.

"Dost thou still believe that thou canst make me fear, Groa?" shrieked Kjartan, bursting into a wild laugh that was lost in the violence of the storm. He wrenched the reins of the horse, so that the bit cut into its flesh and the blood flowed whilst he shouted: "I shall yet show you I am strong enough to defy you, if it were hell itself!"

Then burst forth a terrific crash, as if earth had been torn from its foundations. It was

the Horn that, starting from its place, had crushed Kjartan and his horse!

### VIII.

"WHAT is it ails Kjartan's Raven?" said Jon, the old herdsman, late at midnight. The storm was over, the air was still, and the heavens so bright and clear, that it was almost as light as if it were noonday.

The Raven hopped to and fro outside the keeping-room, beating its wings and screeching. It had neither peace nor quiet until everybody were on their feet and out; then it suddenly flew away in the direction of the frith.

Torbjörn was seized with a presentiment of evil.

"There is something wrong has happened! Out, men all, and seek for Kjartan!" he said.

The following morning, when the sun in all his glorious magnificence stood in high heaven, they reached the spot where the accident had happened. Dark and silent sat the Raven by Kjartan's head, the only portion of his form the Horn had left untouched.

"So this has been the end of thee, my

proud boy!" thought Torbjörn, the tears streaming down his face.

"See you not she was the strongest, old Groa was?" murmured Jon the herdsman. "It was thy fault, cursed Raven!" added he, taking up a stone from the road which he threw after the bird, without, however, reaching it. Then slowly the Raven lifted his outspread wings and rose heavenwards, a couple of times he flew round his dead friend, then vanished behind the cleft that had been cut in the mountain by the fall of the Horn. From that day forth Kjartan's Raven was never seen again.

# THE SETTLER.

I.

THE wooden building outside the warm springs, some quarter of a mile east of Rejkiavik, the common wash-house of the town, was this evening too small to contain all the girls; there was not even place for the half of them, and they therefore speedily agreed to remain in the open air; it was indeed magnificent summer weather, and no one could grumble, since it was the choice of This matter settled, they set to work in earnest. The bank of the stream was edged by a long stretch of busy girls; there was wringing and rinsing and spreading out of linen all round the grass-field, and, truth to say, their merriment did not slacken under their industry; their laughter echoed to the arched heavens, the hours flew with it, and it was midnight.

Then one of them thought that a cup of coffee would not be amiss; it happened that the same idea had struck her right-hand neighbour. This congeniality of sentiment luckily met with no dissentient voice among the whole flock of girls, and one, two, three all hands stopped work, kettles were sunk into the spring, that trusted to nobody's help but its own to keep its water boiling; cups and saucers, and all other requisites needed, came forth, and the girls sat themselves in a circle on the grass, so as to enjoy the feast to the utmost, which they seasoned with all kinds of fun and banter and petty railleries at each other, but all in a spirit of innocent good-nature, taking care to wing no poisoned shaft around.

It was a soft, bright summer night, so still and calm that only now and then a lazy windpuff troubled itself to blow aside the smokewreaths that rose from the spring—thickest near its source, and gradually decreasing as it descended towards its mouth in the lake—and which seemed to have the intention of fixing its dwelling upon the banks of the stream and the surrounding moor, so slowly

did the blue-grey veil circle and wave itself around and over all; so that grazing horse, brown turf-stacks, and all that was elevated above the moor played bo-peep behind everchanging clouds of steam. In the north and west the still and solemn mountain-peaks lifted themselves in soft wavy lines towards the heavens, which even in this hour were almost bathed in clear daylight.

As far as ever eye and ear could reach the sea lay smooth and soundless.

The stillness of nature was unbroken, save by the glad voices of the young girls and the little wagtail, whose best-loved haunts are in these places; it could not sleep for them, and so it made the best of it, and, joining in the merriment, sang them now and then a little song. Well, little songster, you could just as well have kept silent, for indeed there was no one who had time to listen to you!

However, there came one that in a moment restrained the mirth of the party—an Odin's-hen, that most graceful of birds, glided out of the opposite bank. It had also been disturbed by the noise, and thought the night all too beautiful to be lost under the muddy bank,

above all as it might not be left to sleep in peace and quietness. It sailed straight down with the stream until it was just below the place where the girls sat; here the stream broke into stronger gyrations, and shot downwards in rings, and the bright brown speckled little beauty swung round and round as if performing a circular dance, yet constantly keeping as upright and stately as if it intended to represent a liliputian swan.

At first the girls scarcely drew breath for fear of frightening the bird away, and to keep the pretty sight as long as possible before their eyes. The restless stream, however, cared but little for their wishes, and bore the exquisite little swimmer round a bend in its course where it vanished from their sight. Then Guldbjörg, the daughter of the saddler, who, full of fun, was the life and soul of every meeting of the girls when she improvised a song—for she possessed this gift—or hit upon some jocose idea or other, exclaimed: "Can any of you say which amongst us most resembles that bird?"

The questioner had certainly never given the question a thought before it sprang from her lips, much less then had the others expected it; but as it so frequently happens with a sudden question, there was a something with it that instinctively directed them to the answer. Be that as it may, certain it is that when their eyes ran round the circle to find the right one, they all rested, with the exception of her own, upon the same object—the beautiful Stejnun Kolbejn's daughter.

"That does Stejnun," they exclaimed, with one voice.

"Yes, that is so clear we can rhyme on the matter," said Guldbjörg, and off she went into the following extemporised distich:

"Straight and light,
Fine and bright,
The bird looked on the waters;
It came, 'tis gone—
But we know one
Just like it, 'mongst Earth's daughters."

This verse gave rise to fresh jokes and laughter, but Stejnun said: "I would that I may only resemble Odin's bird in this, to hold myself bravely up when the stream of life is most contrary, and that I may fly my own

high way, when I am weary of letting it drive me farther."

"Couldst thou rest contented to remain on earth, little Stejnun, then perhaps we others might be permitted to follow in thy train," said a girl with a pair of cheeks like full-blown peonies. She had too often been the object of taunts upon her good condition, so was not likely to be spared after this remark.

"Yes, truly; for at all events Maria must have a pretty long fast before she will be in condition to enter on a flying match with Stejnun," said another.

This brought with it fresh laughter, and so the fun passed to something new, wit and jest spun round, and Stejnun was the theme of conversation.

But at last, strengthened and refreshed, they set to work again in good earnest. It was morning, broad daylight now. Well, let them work. In the meantime we will make a little closer acquaintance with Stejnun.

# II.

IT was towards the end of 1830, in the last days of King Frederik VI., that Kolbejn,

giving up his place in Ostenland, removed to this town. He bought himself one of the so-called "West houses" on the hill, with a few acres of land around it, and was very soon a highly-esteemed man, who not only had a good fortune to begin with, but knew, moreover, how to increase it under new circumstances. Thus he was one of the first in this part of the country that saw the advantage of using decked boats in the fishery, and had therefore, besides a couple of boats, a little schooner, that most successfully fished out in the deep waters. His example had weight with other daring men. He was a clever and thoughtful man, who could counsel and advise upon everything, a far-seeing and determined man, who gave his opinion in a straightforward way, without respect of persons. This characteristic showed itself more strikingly as years rolled on, particularly after the death of old King Frederik, when the new king of Denmark, Christian VIII., had restored to Iceland the right of speaking and deliberation in the affairs that related to its own people. The Althing—or at any rate its name—recalled to the people grand remembrances of heroic At the first election of the people Kolbejn was numbered amongst its Thingsmen, and he must regard it as a self-evident fact that it should be so, for without contradiction he was the ablest man of the people in the town, and had always spoken freely, and never hidden his dissatisfaction with the Danish adjudication. It can easily be understood that with such feelings he was united heart and soul to the opposition party in the Government; in fact he was its determined and most fearless leader, particularly when they spoke of carrying matters to extremes.

In his own house Kolbejn was a positive authoritative man that regulated everything after his own will. His wife had been lowspirited and out of health from the summer in which her four bold sons had fallen victims to the plague then passing through the land, and of all her flock of blooming children she saw but one remain—her daughter. From this hour she was crushed for ever! This heavy loss was not without its mark upon the heart of Kolbejn also, and every one believed that this was the veritable reason of his leaving his

native place and removing to his present dwelling; but he seemed quickly to get over it, and all his love rested now upon his daughter, who was the apple of his eye, and in everything his joy and pride.

Steinun was formed in her father's mould. both in great and small. The wish that she expressed to resemble Odin's hen, so that she should never be obliged to be bound by the stream, was in reality a significant expression of her interior disposition and manner of feeling. With a fine and delicate exterior she combined a strong and daring soul that assimilated in much to that of her father. This was the reason she felt such delight in listening to all he said, and particularly that in politics she felt involuntarily attracted to the side which he supported; it was as the battle-cry to her that sounded in his voice. That at the bottom of all this discontent against the Danish rule, there was great injustice and excess apparent in her father's enmity and judgment, which arose from the lack of the essential necessity of a careful consideration of all the relations connected with it, she had not yet come to suspect; besides, what should suggest such thoughts to her? All her father's acquaintances were but the echoes of himself and his will; and the young men she and her friends most frequently listened to, pupils from the grammar-school in Bessestad, what wonder that their youthful opinions were less lofty and daring than his?

She had in the school a cousin who was accustomed to spend the short vacations of Christmas and Easter with Kolbejn. Things were plainly spoken of in those days. There was searching and judging, weighing and rejecting, and whatever else was required to fulfil the duty of a good citizen.

## III.

BUT out there by the warm springs there was no place for such grave matters. The high spirits of youth had subjects far fitter to engage them than the intricacies of politics; and Stejnun well knew that from first to last of the whole flock of girls, she was the only one who had ever given a thought to such matters; for at this time, if truth will out, politics were not accustomed to be discussed except by the

select few in this country; the great multitude had as yet no proper conception of its elevation to be initiated into its mysteries.

The girls by the springs had moreover other things to think about. The merriment and work continued until the afternoon; then the clothes were ready—white and dry enough for folding. Fresh mirth arose over folding and placing in sacks and bags and carrying them to the town. Stejnun and Guldbjörg had no trouble with theirs, for Kolbejn's boy brought the black horse to fetch them. He drove the horse back, and the two friends, arm in arm, walked slowly home after him conversing cheerfully.

The summer evening was unusually beautiful. The nearest mountains had draped themselves in the setting sun in a wondrously soft-tinted mantle of reddish-blue, while the western Jokel\* had swathed its cone in purple and gold, the deep border of which lay in folds far away across the wide-spreading horizon. A mild north-west wind just stirred the surface of the sea with a soft rippling

<sup>\*</sup> The "Jokeler," is the name given to those mountains on which the snow is perpetual in Iceland.

motion; but, for all that, was strong enough to fill the sails of a large merchant brig, which at this moment sailed between the islands into the anchorage. The young girls were walking on the beach, and the rattle of the stones. worn smooth by the action of the water, as they slipped from under their feet, with the crash of the mussel-shells as they trod upon them, rendered it necessary for them to raise their voices to be heard by each other above the noise, but simultaneously they stood still silent and enchained by the beautiful sight presented by the brig as the anchor fell, and it turned its larboard quarters forward. The square sails fell like draped tapestry looped up under the cross-trees, and the magnificent Danish flag floating from the gaff shone in the evening sun.

Through the soft evening stillness they could distinctly hear from on board the tones of a young fresh voice full of power. There was the decision of authority in it; how nimbly the seamen scrambled up the shrouds at his clear short word.

"That man can make himself obeyed," said Guldbjörg.

"Yes, that he can," replied Stejnun. Nevertheless, that which had affected her most was the tone of hearty sympathy that rang through the voice. The tones still sounded in her ear as she walked along more silently; at last they descended the hill into the town, but as she entered her father's paddock she tossed her head with an expression of countenance that, had she expressed her feelings in words, would have found vent in some such words as these, "Away with nonsense!"

## IV.

THE brig Johanne, of which there had been a long time much expectant conversation amongst the merchants of the town, was a perfectly new ship that had this time made its first voyage. It had shown itself a superior sailer, and had made an unusually short passage. It was, therefore, not to be doubted that it could still take out fish from here to Spain, and be back again with a cargo of salt before the late autumn storms and dark nights put an end to the navigation for the year; but in that case they must work. There was dis-

charging and lading day and night, the boats passed between the ship and the bridge, and there was no permission to go on shore granted to any of the crew before the brig sailed on her new voyage, which took place a couple of weeks after the evening on which we introduce our readers.

Time passed: August, September, and October came to a close. The last merchant vessel left the haven, whose only animation consisted now in the fishing-boats and the little schooner of Kolbejn's that sailed in once and again when she was short of provisions or such like.

Then came the storms and set the ocean in commotion, and the cold followed in their train. The waves lashed up against the rock, where the water sought footing by freezing and hanging down in long icicles, that grew by each new stroke of the waves. The snow fell far down over the mountains and betokened an early winter.

There was still no news from the brig. At this time there was no steam-ship to connect Iceland with the rest of the world, and soon people did not know what to think of its long disappearance. But one morning it was said that a dark speck was visible outside by "Skagen."

A crowd was soon collected upon the mill-bank, and other elevated places; telescopes were brought out and passed from hand to hand. If it might only be the brig! No! judging from its appearance, that had a very different rigging from this. But what then could it be?

The guessing and conjecturing was long, for the black point crept forward at a snail's pace, and seemed as if it would never approach nearer. The day passed and the long night followed it. However, whilst it crawled slowly in, the wind had worked and carried the floating object with it; it was now seen north of the headland, and through the telescope they could distinctly see that it was the dismantled hull of a sea-vessel that drove forward under some rags of canvas. Now there was no tarrying in sending off boats from land to meet it. You can well believe no hand would be idle, and towards noon the miserable remains of the brig Johanne were towed into the same place on which she had

cast anchor for the first time upon that beautiful summer evening.

Of course it was not long before every child in the town knew how much the remnant of the crew had suffered since the brig, three weeks ago, had lost in a storm her masts, rudder, and half her equipment; that the captain had been washed overboard by a tremendous sea, and in trying to save himself and reach the ship again by swimming, was crushed by a falling cross-tree; that the boats were washed away, and that they all expected certainly to go under, but the courage and endurance of the young first mate, Hansen, had saved what yet remained of men and ship. The young captain's name was on every lip, his praise in every mouth.

"He must be a proud fellow who calls that man son," thought Kolbejn, and it was with difficulty he could hide an old smart that in this moment pierced his heart again.

But in Stejnun's heart rang once more the tones of a voice that recalled the magnificence of the summer, and now it was permitted to make sweet music there.

V.

KOLBEIN JONSON, the son of a sister of Kolbejn, after whom he was called, and whose declared favourite he was, should at the next examination finish his scholastic studies. At that time this final trial of ability gave the candidates admittance to the clerical office. and it was the intention of his family that he should receive ordination and become the curate of his weakly father as soon as the examination was over. And old Kolbein had arranged in his own mind that then he should woo his cousin Stejnun and lead her home as his bride. To this end had all the Christmas attentions pointed, and he never once doubted but his wishes would be happily fulfilled The young folks seemed formed for each other: a cross word had never been heard between them. Stejnun was in fact accustomed to her cousin as he was, and his attentions and kindness to her on every occasion had caused her to overlook that infusion of important self-esteem in his character that sometimes showed itself in his intercourse with others, and which arose from the fact that, being an only child, he had been spoiled by his parents, and as he had always been a clever lad in school he had taken too high an opinion of himself, and in his own imagination he sometimes suspected himself to be a great and beaming light.

Now, latterly, it happened strangely enough that Steinun, who formerly had scarcely given her cousin a thought when he was not present, began to think of him, and that, as above all, she had scarcely ever thought of rendering to herself any account of her feelings towards him, began now very frequently to question them; but, alas! the more she thought of him the paler became his image in her thoughts. Was he handsome? He! so stout; and, added to this, a head of hair-well, all but-red. Was he a cleverer fellow than the rest of them? Well, to hear his severe censures upon this and that, one might indeed believe so. Was he liberal-minded, equitable? Well, certainly, one should not measure all men in the same mould. If the past had sins upon his conscience, would not the present recompense for it? Ah, it was a secret, but Stejnun had a still small voice in her heart that was a party on the other side.

Steinun had always from a child had the run of the saddler's house; Guldbjörg was indeed her bosom friend, but it could not be denied that her visits during this winter were more frequent than they had ever been. parents never troubled themselves about the matter, but there were sharp eyes amongst the young girls in the town, who were not slow in thinking that the new commander of the brig Johanne, who was lodging at the saddler's until the ship should be in condition to put to sea, and this could not possibly be before the spring, had certainly not quite frightened her from the house since she was there so often; and he was so frequently to be seen in pleasant chat with her and Guldbjörg. Had they but seen her cheeks redden and her eyes beam when she chanced to exchange a few words with the handsome young man alone—yes! then they would assuredly have known still more.

So stood affairs as Christmas approached. The vacation began, and her cousin arrived. How changed he was for Stejnun from the last visit; how natural it was to her now that this and that could not be as he said. She could also have an opinion upon matters as well as he; and her opinion was now very different to his. Kolbejn Jonson stared, and was so taken aback with this at first, as to lose his presence of mind; but he quickly recovered himself in the consciousness of his great superiority. "That will pass; wait only until the Christmas ball comes!" he thought.

Some days after this he brought her an invitation to the ball. This was, he knew, the greatest joy that he could have procured for her; and last year in her delight she had kissed him because he had subscribed, but for her sake, to it. But now what ailed her? Did it give her no pleasure? Well then, she could not be well. Had he not better fetch the country doctor?

"She could send for the doctor herself if she required him, and Kolbejn might cease troubling himself about anything!"

Young Kolbejn knew neither the why nor wherefore of all this, and none the less could he make it out when that same evening she came of her own accord and said she would now like to go with him to the ball.

Could he but have suspected that the reason she wished to go so much with him was that she had heard in the interval that Guldbjörg would be there with—the Dane.

## VI.

THE evening of the ball came. Athwart the end of the street, that from the west side led directly from the harbour through the town. the low house, which was then the club-room of the locality, was beaming in a splendour of light. Every one in possession of the necessary public estimation and age and for the rest were capable of footing it in step to the policeman's orchestral flute, was there. Even outside in the street the windows were besieged by a mass of heads, great and small, who seemed in the highest state of enjoyment and content, in spite of small inconvenient circumstances incident to their position, which might be supposed to take somewhat from the more pleasurable enjoyment of life here; for the street was one sheet of ice, and it was a biting frost. It was well for them that the

warmth of the ball-room had thawed the panes, so that outside they could see everything perfectly; the lamps all round the walls, and the lights in the great dazzling glass chandelier in the middle of the room.

The Government officials wore their red gold-brocaded uniforms, and the young girls all in white, with the young student dressed in black; everything could be seen, and you may be sure it was well for the greater part in the room that the thick windows intervened between their ears and the tongues of the audience outside.

"Look you at that lump of fat! he has much to do to keep from melting in the warmth!" said a little fellow with his hands cased in great leathern mittens, cap with ear-flaps, and a blue frozen nose-tip pressed to the window-pane.

"Why, yes; for he has something more to occupy him than dangling after one's heels; whilst we draw fish in twelve degrees of cold, he will find it good for his health, he will!" answered his companion in a voice that sounded half-frozen.

The genteel shopman had just led his lady

to a seat panting, but smiling in a state of glorious satisfaction, whilst, with an immense red silk handkerchief, he wiped the dripping perspiration from his brow. Little did he imagine that just at that instant he was the object of attention for the most verdant of the youths present—the impertinence of his own shop-boy!

Guldbjörg and Steinun sat side by side; the first was dressed in a white ball-dress, and looked well in it—healthy, confident, and as full of the enjoyment of life as she always was; but Steinun, although she only wore the daily Icelandic dress, still carried off the palm from most of those present. The close-fitting black jacket set off to perfection her soft, slender and elastic figure, and the black cap, with its silver circlet and silk tassel, sat so coquet over her golden hair, which, collected in two long plaits, hung down from the back of her head almost to her feet; her fresh cheeks glowed, her glad eyes beamed. "How could she help it?" every heart was hers that looked upon her in this moment.

There was an old woman, however, outside the window who looked offended because she had not dressed herself smart enough for such a festive occasion as this.

"She looks really nice this evening, Guldb-jörg, that she does!" said she to the saddler's servant-maid. "That makes a show, the red sash she has on; but it is very strange that Stejnun does not wear a Danish dress since she has come to the Dane's ball; but she dare not do that for young Kolbejn's sake, I can well think!"

"Stuff! she cares mighty little for Kolbejn Jonsön!" answered the one to whom she spoke. "No, no; watch only to whom she gives her knot when the cotillion begins; I bet ten to one it will be to him with whom she is spinning round now!"

"What do you say, Captain Hansen?"

"Only look how she simpers at what he said; that is plain enough, I know!"

But there were many besides these two who had noticed that Stejnun and the young seaman were not indifferent to each other, and, as might be expected, it had not escaped her cousin's attention that in her turn, or out of it, she was every moment flying over the floor at the side of the sailor. What a handsome

pair they were! Kolbejn was ready to fly out of his skin at the sight. Hansen was, without contradiction, the best dancer in the room this evening, and the king in the eyes of all the ladies; he had in his bearing that open bold seaman's deportment that sat so naturally upon him and became him so well; in that, without the slightest ostentation, it was joined to a certain softness and considerateness in all he did, that made so much greater impression, since every one knew that he was accustomed to command, and that just in the consciousness of his superiority he had effected that which, above all, had made him the lion of the town for this winter.

As he led Stejnun again to her place, Kolbejn was immediately by her side.

"We dance the supper-dance together, Stejnun?" he said, in a tone that plainly implied, Of course you have no objection to this.

"That I cannot, cousin; for I have promised it to Mr. Hansen," answered Stejnun.

"I should think you might have supposed I should just have wished for this dance. I am surely a little nearer to you than that Dane?" he answered hotly.

"I think that in this matter I require nobody's advice but my own, Kolbejn!" answered Stejnun, with blushing cheeks, "and I can just tell you that if I dance with nobody but you this evening I shall not dance at all!"

In this instant Hansen again approached, evidently with the intention of inviting Stejnun to another turn on the floor. Kolbejn turned towards him with sparkling eyes and a mien as if he intended to crush his adversary, and who can say what might have happened if Guldbjörg had not been quick-witted enough to rise from her seat, seize Kolbejn's hand and say:

# "Now let us two dance!"

Irresistibly he felt himself drawn by her voice, and with the words "Come then!" he started like a whirlwind on the floor with her, at the same time sending after Stejnun a glance of rage, who had accepted Hansen's invitation to dance.

From this moment Kolbejn's conduct was almost unbearable. He poured down one glass of wine after the other, tore along in the dance so that he was in a perfect vapour-bath, and was very soon the terror of all the ladies.

The pain he caused to Stejnun was heightened to overflowing from the high degree of attention he attracted towards her by his looks and exclamations. Here again Guldbjörg showed herself a true friend, and she also understood how to tame the ungovernable young man for a short time, now with sober earnestness, now with jest; but, spite of all, the ball became a place of unbearable torture at last for Stejnun, who got up and left the hall to go home. She put on her shawl and was about to leave the house, when Hansen stood by her side.

"You must not go, Stejnun!" he entreated.

"For God's sake let me go. I can no longer endure it in there!"

"Then, however, you will permit me to accompany you?" he asked.

She answered nothing to this, which he naturally took for consent, so fetching his hat and great-coat, the next instant they were side by side in the street.

Let nobody wonder at a lady from a ball venturing thus out into the night, without the least regard to wind or weather, without calling a carriage or other conveyance of that kind. But, first and foremost, the whole town did not possess a *single* carriage, and the one sedanchair, which at this time was placed at the service of the ladies under the difficulties of mud, impassable weather, or any natural weakness when they would go to a ball, a girl like Stejnun, even if she had been sufficiently genteel to take such a thing into consideration, would not, for anything you could offer, have sat herself in it. No, with her shawl over her head she was sufficiently protected from the cold, and, with *him* by her side, what needed she more.

But certain it is her thoughts were anywhere but upon the way they went, for instead of going west over the hill towards her father's house, they passed straight down the sands by the frozen sea before the town, where, in the days of childhood, the steep slope had so often afforded a course for her sledge, and the bright smooth sheet of ice had tempted her to an exhilarating slide.

A quiet winter night surrounded them; there was no moon in the firmament and but few stars; the arched vault of heaven had a strange louring look, veiled by dusky-hued

clouds, as if the weather were on the point of change. No sound reached them save now and then the distant bark of a dog or the faint cry of a sea-gull, but they did not remark it. From time to time a broad black shadow floated over their heads; it was a raven that flew before them on the way, but of that also they were unconscious.

They were conscious of naught save what he whispered into her soul as they walked along, his arm around her waist, and he in low and tender tones told her of the life out there, where the broad soft beech-forests crown the verdant coasts as the white-sailed ships pass by in hundreds. As he unrolled these pictures for her soul, how clearly shone before her a white house on the strand in the radiant sunbeams! The windows and doors were framed in wreathing honeysuckle mixed with sweetbriar and hops; but in the doorway she saw a face beaming with gladsome happiness, and she knew that it was her own -the captain's wife-who recognised her husband's ship there, amongst the happy ones that first sought the harbour with a good cargo.

"Shall I not put thee into my story?" he asked, but the answer he must guess from the sinking of a young beautiful head until it rested in confident trust upon his shoulder.

Then, in a moment, the gloomy night was changed to dazzling brightness. She lifted up her head, and both turned; the young sailor gazed with amazement upon this singular spectacle so unknown to him.

Sweeping across the wide and lofty arch of heaven, the aurora borealis spread its waving tongues of fire that stretched themselves with ever deepening swell, resting its glimmering arch in ceaseless lustre now upon the north, now upon the east, and now upon the western horizon. It changed in its ever varied play to all the colours in the rainbow, and in its strange transformations took so many changes and in such rich variety, that human fantasy could not conceive them. By degrees it spread over the whole archway of heaven, so that it became a cupola of golden rays that spanned the silent mountains, sea, and town. What wonderfully gorgeous pictures did he not collect from all this that passed before his eyes!

He stood long in perfect silence, deeply

moved by the grandeur of this midnight scene.

"And I shall deprive thee of this, Stejnun," he said at last, as he read her pride and delight at this spectacle in her beaming eyes.

"No, you will not; I shall bear it with me down there when I follow thee," she replied. And now I feel myself doubly rich in this since thou hast gazed upon the sight with me."

It was pain for them to separate, but the striking of the church clock reminded them of home, and they passed through the snow-covered paddock both silent, sunk in feelings of the highest solemnity.

Even in after years he could never think upon the evening in which he won his dear wife without again experiencing a sense of the solemnity he felt when he stood with his arm round her waist, beneath the vaulted arch of God's own cathedral, that seemed as if adorned by Him in this magnificence to shine upon the altar where their young love was plighted.

#### VII.

As might be expected after such an extraordinary display of the northern lights, the next morning brought with it a change of weather. The wind sprang up, and with the strong east wind followed a raw damp temperature-sleet and driving rain succeeded the clear, still frosty days. The sea-mew circled round and round with clamour and shrieks down by the coast, whilst up in the grassfields the ravens crept together with draggled feathers and drooping wings, making most melancholy figures of themselves. With Steinun the state of things inside her home was pictured by the prospect outside so long as Kolbein Jonsön's Christmas visit still continued. His self-love had been wounded in the highest degree at being put aside for a Dane, and now he was of course more than ever enraged at Stejnun's happy feelings, which she found impossible to hide under a bushel. His taunts and surly manner made him by no means more agreeable in Stejnun's eyes, but it soon opened those of her parents. Her mother who, into the bargain, felt herself at this time so ill that it required the force of necessity to keep from bed, was completely cast down at the thought of the storm that was brewing in the house.

She knew her husband's resolute will; knew that his plans and the wish nearest his heart was being crossed by the misunderstanding between the young people, and she had seen his face wax pale as a sheet from the anger that shot through him when he awoke to the consciousness of the true grounds for this conduct. So far he had uttered no word upon the matter, but the morning his nephew returned to Bessestad at the end of the vacation, and at leave-taking had thanked his uncle for the pleasant visit, he said:

"Thou hast less to thank for than thy speech implies, kinsman; but first get thy examination well out of hand, then I intend that we shall speak together in a different fashion; by that time Stejnun will also have learned to understand that we are three in this matter."

"There you are mistaken, father; we shall remain then as we are now—there will be at least *four* in this matter," replied Stejnun, and with a proud toss of her head she passed quickly from the room.

Kolbejn was angry, but in the glance he sent after his daughter, one could have traced

another sentiment besides pure anger at her bold self-assertion of independence,—a something that might have been construed thus: "I should perhaps have done the same."

Later on in the day he put on a little roughness and said, "It is better, Stejnun, that thou keep away from the saddler's for the present."

"The less I see him, so much the more can I think of him," thought Stejnun; but soon, if she would meet her friend, it must be only in the secret resting-place of her own heart, for as the days grew longer he was obliged to leave the town so as to be at hand to hasten the reparations going on with the brig, which had been obliged to seek winter shelter in a neighbouring haven more fitted by nature to protect it from the wild storms than was the roadstead of Rejkjavik.

But before his departure he openly sought Kolbejn, and told him that Stejnun and he were one in heart, and now only waited for the blessings of her parents on their union; that he had every intention to make her happy; that his worldly circumstances were such as brought a good income now, and he had still better prospects for the future.

Kolbejn admired this straightforwardness, and felt, in spite of himself, attracted by the young seaman's demeanour, but he had passed his word to his sister for her son's union with his daughter; he had himself chosen his name—and—for this man he was but a Dane!

"I have given my word for another," he said, "and I have never been accustomed to pass my word without fulfilling what it implies; and besides," added he, with a smile, expressive of a little disdain, "Stejnun had best remain where she has taken root, she will scarcely thrive upon other soil than the deposit behind the mountains of Iceland. We must therefore let this matter pass."

This was *his* word—but against this the two young people set the immovable faith of their affection, and so long as the world has stood, and shall stand, *love* has and will be the strongest champion.

The winter months passed in sorrow and anxiety in Kolbejn's house, for his wife's decline increased, until at last she could no longer rise from her bed. Towards Easter,

it was clear to every one that her days were numbered here on earth. In all this time, neither day nor night, had Stejnun moved from her mother's bed; the weaker she became, just so much the more did the tenderness and endurance of the daughter increase. It was almost as if she imagined she had not been, for her mother what she should have been, and sought now to make reparation, just as if she had not done everything possible to lift from that mother's soul the heaviness that had so long depressed it. It may be even as she now lay here and fought the last strife!

It was in the dusk of the evening of the sick woman's last day. The ordinary silence of the twilight hour was heightened in the house of sickness by that peculiar stillness which the solemn visitor always sends before him as his herald. They came and went with hushed footsteps, they spoke in voices softened and subdued, the dog was silenced at the faintest bark. Kolbejn stood thoughtfully outside the house, leaning against the hard frozen bank. His eyes were turned westward, where the Jöklen lifted up its head

in the clear frosty air, arrayed in the splendour of the setting sun's last ray. Now here, now only there, thought he; now the last ray of glory is quenched! So will it be in there, the last beam of our life-in-one will soon be put out. Was it not almost that already? The last two days and nights she had lain unconscious; would that he might once more get a smile from those dear eyes, that long since in his youthful days had filled his heart with warmth and joy.

And he should obtain this when he went in. He had softly opened the door, but his foot was stayed involuntarily, for he heard again the old sweet, tender voice which still echoed so fond and faithful into his soul. "My blessing rest upon you both," he heard her say to Stejnun, who stood leaning over her bed, dissolved in silent tears. "Thy father's will follow later; but it will be very lonely for him, poor man! Do not forget him in his old age, Stejnun."

Just then her eye fell upon her sorrowladen husband, who approached her bed. Exerting her last remnant of strength, she lifted her head from the pillow, laid one hand upon her daughter's head, and with the other grasped the outstretched hand of her husband. "Now it is well. Good-night!" she said, in a strangely fresh and melodious voice. Then her head sank back upon the pillow.

The light was brought, and as they looked more closely on her, she had sank to rest in that sleep that knows no waking.

### VIII.

THE day upon which Kolbejn from the west house buried his wife, proved that he was a man of estimation among his people, for the train that assembled in the churchyard to witness their sympathy with the partner of the deceased, was very numerous, and consisted not only of the townsfolk, but even of the proprietors from a distance. The merchants floated their flags half-mast high, and the funeral was celebrated with the highest degree of solemnity. The tones of the new organ swelled over the coffin—this was one of the first occasions on which the organ had been heard in the church—and by the grave the pupils from Bessestad sang.

Young Kolbejn had arrived the evening

before the funeral, and had not father and daughter both been so absorbed in their grief, they must immediately have been struck by the change in him.'

The young man's disposition had undergone a complete revolution, and as a consequence, his exterior behaviour was a perfect contrast to what it had been when they saw him last. He met Stejnun in a friendly and natural manner, while he testified his sympathy with her, and neither word nor look betrayed that any sting remained in his mind for the repulse she had given him. But the reason of this was as follows:

· Soon after the Christmas visit, it gradually became clear to him that in reality he had never properly understood the right nature of his feelings for Stejnun, but had quietly acquiesced in what others had arranged for him in the matter without question. Now, to his amazement, he opened his eyes to the fact that she was to him a dear relative and nothing more, and that her union with whoever it might be—hem!—a Dane?—well for that matter it was more than he could do to hinder it—was an affair in which he had not

the least concern. This discovery brought with it a peace and tranquillity of mind highly favourable for the study necessary for his degree; and for the last three months Homer and Genesis, Ursin and Svenningsen, reigned in his thoughts by day and his dreams by night.

But were his thoughts quite filled by these? No! it had very often happened that a fresh bright face peeped from the books, so that the Greek and Hebrew characters, and the mathematical and geometrical figures changed themselves to blue eye or rosy cheeks, on words that would sound in joyous melody, as when Guldbjörg took his hand, and said: "Now we two will dance, Kolbejn;" or as when she improvised one of her little songs.

At the funeral of his mother, Stejnun, after so long, long an absence, first saw him again whom she could least have missed on this occasion, since she must see him in secret, and bear to him the blessing she who slept below had breathed for them in her life's last moment.

His stay in the town was not more than a couple of days, and yet it was sufficiently long

absence of her husband on his different vogages, she alone must direct and attend to all the affairs of the family. But he heard frequently from them, and as years went round his conviction and assurance grew stronger and stronger, that the foundations of his daughter's happiness were fixed upon a rock. Nor was he ignorant that Steinun was a wise and prudent woman, a wife who could hold her own against any one when in a difficulty that touched her husband and children, and that under many vicissitudes of life she had borne even-handed with her husband every severe dispensation of Providence with calmness and strength of soul. And therefore Kolbejn was proud of his daughter, and when he sat and thought of her he would rub his hands in the glad thought that in nothing need she stand behind the Danes over there!

For the rest, he had not, during that time, rested on the shelf and suffered Time to run past him. No; he had kept pace with it, and sought to satisfy to the fullest extent all that it demanded of him. The old house, whose walls and roof had been of clay and green-

cleave a way onward through the air. every attempt they were driven back by an irresistible force that met its first resistance in the blow with which the wave they fell upon threw them again up into the air. The whole town seemed to shake from its foundation, and that not a single house succumbed to the violent assaults of the storm was a miracle that must be attributed to the tough elastic nature of the wood of which most of the houses were built, for a brick building would have had no possibility of holding together in such weather. Kolbein's schooner, that had just finished fitting out for its first spring voyage, lay in the haven. For a long time it bore it well; stern and topsail were cut away by the wind, which at the same time would have sunk the vessel had not the stout anchor-chain appeared willing to defy the anvil-strokes of the waves to a trial of strength.

Then said one who was watching with his glass from behind the houses where every one sought shelter:

"Now I believe the schooner drives; her one chain must have sprung."

Yes, a second could also see it. As he spoke the first speaker exclaimed:

"She is drifting to the rock on the east; so good-night to thee, schooner."

But the danger to the schooner had also been remarked by the saviour of the brig Johanne, who had also immediately perceived that the only escape the schooner had from destruction was to change her course by means of sails, and run her aground upon the sands farther down in the bay, inside the rocks before spoken of. There was a couple of men on board, but they seemed to have given up all exertion, for they stood as if stupefied by the rattlings, holding fast in the shrouds, whilst the ship drove along to certain destruction. The young seaman found it impossible to remain longer among the crowd of idle and profitless spectators. He must away whether his attempt succeed or not; no matter -he must try. A moment after he had sucided in launching a boat, with the assistance some other brave fellows, and after a vigoous battle with the elements they reached e vessel before it was yet too late to turn from the course of death.

In breathless and mute excitement the spectators, from their place of shelter, watched the whole manœuvre.

"Now her tackling is free!" "She changes her course!" "The schooner is saved!" "Hurrah for Captain Hansen!" flew from every mouth, but the storm drowned the sound of applause as if it were enraged that this man should be praised, the only one who had dared to try his strength with it to-day!

## IX.

ONE beautiful evening in May Stejnun received a visit from Guldbjörg. It was evident she had something very important to communicate to her friend, for although they were alone in the room the conversation was carried on in whispering tones, and every feature of Stejnun's countenance bore the impress of glad astonishment, which at last she could no longer restrain, but must give her surprise vent in an audible exclamation.

"This is indeed the happiest tidings you could have brought me, Guldbjörg," she said; "and God bless you both, and give you hap-

course of the day to enter the harbour; for the first time in his long life Kolbein this day hoisted the Danish flag upon his house. that were the old schooner there outside then it had been painted and spruced up, and the old man, as he stood in his home-field, nodded with a glance of contentment to it, and could not help thinking, "The little one out there holds herself bravely amongst the many proud . war-ships that foreign lands have sent hither to honour king and country." From the early morning he was in a strangely glad expectant state of mind, and many times he said that he had a presentiment this day would bring a great and deep heart-gladness to him. He could not rest, but was out to see after the weather every instant; at last he came in with the words, "Put on your best bib and tucker, Guldbjörg, for it clears now!"

And so it had, the rain-clouds separated and the sun peeped forth. Then the cry ran round, "They come now!" and a moment after the royal frigate, *Fylland*, followed by its escort of two Danish men-of-war, sailed from behind the green islands outside the haven.

In a state of the most solemn expectation the people—men and women, young and old —waited on the shore. The brightening weather also added its share in heightening the splendour and joy of this solemn moment; for the beams of the sun upon mountain and sea gave life to the whole landscape, and as if to form a glorious arch of honour for the royal ship, a mighty rainbow beamed on high, spanning the haven, its extremities stretching from the eastern to the western isles on either side.

Then burst forth a royal salute from all the foreign men-of-war. Never had this land heard a salute that equalled that, the first greeting to the beautiful frigate, that with the royal standard floating from her mast-head and foaming bow, rushed between the islands into the haven. Every ship which this majestic sailer passed was covered with flags and with manned oars, that expressed their homage in a salute that echoed in the distant mountains; but the greeting of the people to the Danish King was borne to the foreign vessels in Denmark's magnificent national song:

<sup>&</sup>quot;King Christian stood by the lofty mast," etc.,

which the musicians on the deck caused to echo over the waves. The whole scene was such as to affect both heart and mind in an indescribable manner.

Kolbein and his guest arrived in good time at the prettily and richly adorned landingbridge. The old man's white head was raised upwards so that all could see from his beaming eyes the joy he bore deep within his silent breast. By his side shone Guldbjörg in full dress; the tastefully gold-embroidered dark jacket and skirt, the white coif that bears so strong a resemblance in its form to the Phrygian cap, with its golden fillets, and the transparent veil that fell in free folds over shoulder and back. To no one was this dress more becoming than to Guldbjörg, who looked as fearless and as fresh as in the old days, with her rosy cheeks and laughing eyes and round full figure. She had always been reckoned a beautiful woman, able to attract all eyes when she was dressed; but to-day all eyes had something else to do. "Is he coming? Will he soon come?" every eye asked whose gaze was concentrated upon the sea.

Then, for the second time to-day, the thunder

of cannon rolled across the sea, and a boat, bearing the royal standard in the stern, flew toward the strand, impelled by the measured strokes of the seaman's oars, and a moment after King Christian IX. set foot upon the soil of Iceland, surrounded by the hearts of a people whose throbbing pulses beat for him a fervent and grateful reception.

On his return home Kolbejn talked much with his guests, as every one else did, of the King's straightforward friendliness of manner. "Yes," said the old man, "it will be long before I forget the shake of the hand he gave me, and now I am his man!"

#### XII.

THE same afternoon one of the sailor-boys on board the King's frigate stood before the officer of the watch with his hand to his cap.

"What's on thy heart now, Kolbejn Hansen?" asked he.

"I wish to ask permission to go on shore Mr. Lieutenant," said the boy.

"We lose no time, boy; his Majesty is scarcely free from the ship before you come

with your leave for land. May be you imagine that Tivoli\* has flitted over here!"

"I should take a letter from my mother to her father who lives here in the town," said the little fellow somewhat crestfallen at this half-refusal.

"Hallo, lad! that's another affair; but who the deuce could have suspected that we had a bit of a stockfish here? Well, smarten up in a twinkling, and you may go with the steam long-boat, that goes to land directly; but remember you are at the bridge again before ten. Do you hear?"

"Yes, Mr. Lieutenant," answered the boy; as he touched his cap, turned to the right, and was away in a twinkling.

Some one knocked at Kolbejn's door, but he was deep in conversation with Guldbjörg upon the important events of the day, so that he did not hear it. The knock was repeated, then Guldbjörg opened the door. Outside

<sup>•</sup> Tivoli, public gardens in Copenhagen, so-called, and which are celebrated for concerts and all kinds of summer amusements, and are visited by all classes, from royalty to the lowest mechanic.

stood a noble-looking boy in the dress of a Danish man-of-war; the cap, with the name of the frigate in gold on the band, sat jauntily on the fair curly hair, and Guldbjörg often thought, when she recalled the look in his eye, that never before had she been caught by a look like this which prisoned her heart at the first moment of meeting.

"I should bring this letter," said the boy, taking one out, which, for precaution's sake, he had placed in his breast wrapped up in a pocket-handkerchief. "It is certainly for you," he said in a voice that betrayed by its tone his childish awe at sight of the upright old man of whom he had so often heard his mother speak.

The old man received the letter with thanks, and bade the boy be seated. "It is from Stejnun," he said to Guldbjörg as he looked at the handwriting. He opened the letter and read, but what words, however eloquent, could delineate the expression of heartfelt happiness that shone from every feature of his countenance as he drew to the end of the letter? It was as follows:

"Copenhagen, July 18th, 1874.

"MY DEAR OLD FATHER,

"By the same ship that brings you our King I send you these lines. Too well I know your deep far-seeing mind not to know that you will certainly be one of those who will best understand the signification of this royal expedition for our fatherland, and therefore I pray God that you may hail the day strong in health and happy in mind that shall see King Christian IX. as the new thousand years settler of union and love!

"Would that I could stand by thy side on that day! But this my fate forbids; yet, if I cannot be there myself, I will place there to represent me a settler, since he comes hither in the royal ship—a little one whose presence will tell thee I remember my mother's last words: 'Forget him not in his old age, Stejnun,' for the bearer of this letter is my dearest boy, who also bears beside thy name. Yes, take the little Danish settler to thy breast as sent thee from

"Thy loving daughter,
"STEINUN."

And the old man opened his arms for the beautiful boy, and great tears rolled down his cheeks as he pressed him to his heart, and looked down into his eyes. Oh, they were her eyes. In almost every feature of the boy he discovered an unmistakable resemblance to his mother, just as she was in the days when she still went by her father's side. He was so overcome that for a long time he was incapable of expressing a single word. The sight of this wordless emotion had such an effect upon Guldbjörg that she also began to weep, and the boy seeing this, thought there was nothing else for him to do than to follow suit; so, as can well be imagined, it would soon have been too sad an affair, had not Guldbjörg all at once begun to laugh at the discovery she had just made that the boy had inherited his mother's dimple in the right cheek. Thereupon the little one began to smile at it, and then it was the turn of the old man. Yes, that was so very amusing; and from this moment it was all smiles and sunshine.

## XIII.

How the days flew! The visit of the King shed sunshine in every nook of old Kalbeja's

heart. So long as it lasted, the boy received permission to spend every day on shore, and more, when the commander of the frigate, who loved to encourage and reward his clever lads, heard of the joy the old man found in the society of his grandson and namesake, he extended his permission and permitted him to remain the last few days the night also. Kolbejn's home was now the scene of unceasing glad and happy conversation, and what joy it was that they understood each other so well—the old man and the boy! If the Danish of the grandfather now and then failed to express his meaning, the boy came to his help with the few Icelandic words he had learned of his mother; but so amusing was it to the old man to hear his grandson's pronunciation of the words, that he would laugh until he shook again, and Guldbjörg must often come to the boy's relief when the old man had found a downright difficult word to exercise his readiness of speech and flexibility of pronunciation. Then he must relate to them from morning till night of life in Denmark, and be told in return all the changes that had taken place in her old home since Steinun had left it for good; and then he must see every spot his mother had spoken of, and it was really very fortunate that Guldbjörg was here and could show him all round, for no one knew so well as she did all her favourite places. She was unwearied in his gratification; early and late she was out. Her husband's riding-horse and her own she had brought from the moor, where they grazed, and they might both be seen rushing along the roads in a whizzing trot, at such a rate that in the beginning Kolbejn No. 3 must often, in passing a narrow turning, seize fast hold on the grey mare's streaming mane to keep his seat; but it was not long before he was a capital horseman.

"No wonder; it runs in his blood to keep his seat on a wild horse," said Guldbjörg to the old man.

"Yes, yes, he is like his mother in this and everything else he does, Guldy," answered the old man, with, considering the circumstances, a most allowable feeling of pride.

On the evening of the day on which his leave expired, he went out to the warm springs. It was a clear, cool August evening. The wash-house, which little Kolbein knew

from his mother's recitals, was still there: empty and closed, for the town had just now other things to occupy it than washing clothes.

They sprang from their horses, and throwing the reins on the necks of the animals, left them to graze on the green slope whilst they sat down on the soft green grass, and Guldbjörg, who generally did the honours on these little riding excursions, brought from her bag the little flask of sweet wine and some small cakes. It was a well-known picture unfolded before the boy's eyes: the smoke-clouds from the springs, the brown turf-stacks, the grazing horses on the moor, with the mountains north and west. Yes, all he knew from the narratives of his mother; and now—

"Oh! what a lovely little bird, Aunt Guldbjörg!" he exclaimed, pointing to a little Odin's hen, that stately and erect sailed down the stream.

But this sight struck the key of memory too powerfully for Guldbjörg; she could not restrain her emotion, and burst into a violent fit of weeping. Long was she incapable of answering the question of her young kinsman as to the reason of this overpowering emotion; but, conquering herself, she told him of that summer night when his mother and she, with the rest of their companions, had sat here upon this very spot, and seen the Odin's hen glide past as it did just now, and disappear behind the turn in the stream as it has done this moment.

"But we quickly found its symbol upon land," she said, melting again into tears, "for we all thought then that thy mother resembled the bird; and now I shall never see her more!" and at this thought her tears fell faster.

"Yes, truly," thought the boy, "Aunt Guldbjörg was right: my mother has certainly sat at that time as beautiful amongst the girls as that little bird was amongst the birds."

"But now I shall talk about you every day to mother, Aunty Guldbjörg; and if I live to get a ship to command myself, I shall bring mother to visit you," he said to comfort her; and she could not help pressing the little fellow in her warm embrace, and the tears were turned once more to smiles.

## XIV.

In the soft bright dawn of day the royal vessel

left the haven again. Amongst those who at that early hour stood on the shore, and saw the beautiful sight vanish from before their eves, was the old Kolbein.

Thus had he stood with head bowed down in sorrow upon this very spot in days long vanished past recall, and seen the brig Johanne sail away with all that was dearest to him in heart and life, and he had returned lonely and sad to his deserted home. Now this ship bore from him his King, and his "heart's little settler," as Stejnun had baptized him-his grandson. They were borne from his lifepath: his aged eyes could scarcely hope to see them more, but with lifted head he saw them start; for, clear as that bright morning star, he had at length seen the dawning of a hope which caused his breast to echo glad thanksgivings, and the words of holy Simeon sounded humbly in his heart, "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace."

THE END.

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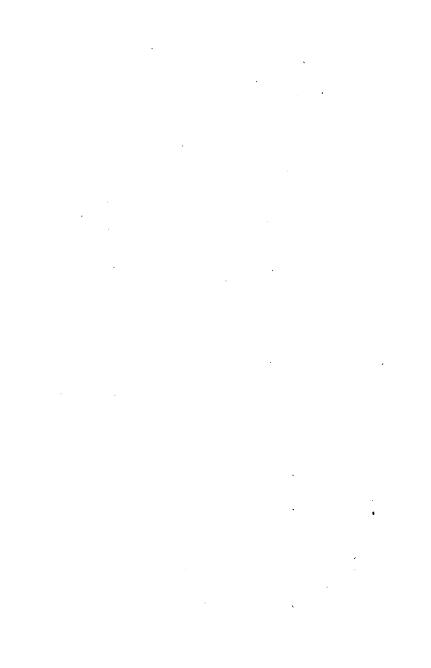
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